

conventional dress looks elegant and stylish to those who are accustomed to it, as is now the case with ourselves and the current dress, which makes both sexes present an appearance far removed from the natural outline of human beings. Then, at the limit, that is at to-day's fashions, coquetry can be employed again, and a sense stimulus can be exerted again, by simply making variations on the existing fashions at the limit. It is impossible to eliminate the sense stimulus, or to establish a system of societal usage in which indecency shall be impossible. The dresses of Moslem women, nuns, and Quakeresses were invented in order to get rid of any possible question of decency. The attempt fails entirely. A Moslem woman with her veil, a Spanish woman with her mantilla or fan, a Quakeress with her neckerchief, can be as indecent as a barbarian woman with her petticoat of dried grass.

447. Present conventional limits. In our own society decency as to dress, words, gestures, etc., is a constant preoccupation. That is not the case with naked savages or half-naked barbarians. The savages put on ornament to be admired and to exert attraction or produce effect. The

same effect is won by words,
 ges-
 tures, dress, etc. Our
 aesthetic arts all exert the
 same influence.
 We expel all these things
 from our artificial
 environment down
 to a limit, in order to
 restrain and control the
 stimulus. Then
 we think that we are decent.
 That is because we rest at
 peace
 in a status which is
 conventional and accustomed.
 Variation from
 it one way is fastidious; the
 other way is indecent, just
 as it
 would be at any other limit
 whatever. It is the
 comparison of
 the mores of different times
 and peoples which shows the
 arbi-
 trariness and conventionality.
 It would be difficult to
 mention
 anything in Oriental mores
 which we regard with such
 horror as
 Orientals feel for low-necked
 dresses and round dances.
 Orientals
 use dress to conceal the
 contour of the form. The
 waist of a
 woman is made to disappear
 by a girdle. To an Oriental a
 corset,
 which increases the waist line
 and the plasticity of the
 figure, is
 the extreme of indecency —
 far* worse than nudity. It
 seems like
 an application of the art of the
 courtesan to appeal to
 sensuality.¹
 Perhaps the most instructive
 case of all is that of the
 Tuareg

¹ Vambeiy, *SittenUlder*
aus dem Morgenlande,
 49.